

5 A Day and School-Age Children

Why Do Children Need 5 A Day?

Healthy eating habits start early. In fact, adults that eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables usually ate plenty of fruits and vegetables as children. Health experts recommend 5 A Day, every day because fruits and vegetables are:

Rich in Vitamins and Minerals Essential for Growth and Development

- **Vitamin A** - important for growth, vision and cell integrity.
- **Vitamin C** - important for ligaments and gums, wound healing and production of blood cells.
- **Folate** - important for normal cell division, wound healing and prevention of birth defects.
- **Vitamin B₆** - important for muscles, nerves and blood cells.
- **Vitamin K** - important for proper blood clotting.
- **Calcium** - important for bone health, teeth, nerve impulses and more.
- **Magnesium** - important for bones, nerve impulses and muscle function.
- **Iron** - transports oxygen and CO₂; important for immune function and cognitive performance.
- **Selenium** - important for fat and vitamin E metabolism; may protect against cancer.
- **Potassium** - regulates many cellular functions; aids in the metabolism of carbohydrate and protein.

Low in Fat and Good Sources of Fiber

- A diet low in fat may reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity and some cancers.
- Studies show that diets high in fiber have been linked to lower risks of some types of cancer.
- Fiber-rich foods help to keep your digestive system healthy and help keep blood cholesterol and blood sugar normal.
- Fiber is filling, which prevents overeating.

Good Sources of Cancer-reducing Compounds

Research is under way to discover how these compounds affect health. Different plant families provide different health benefits, so eating a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables is recommended. Fruits and vegetables help reduce the risk of cancer because they are rich sources of:

- **Carotenoids** - a group of compounds related to vitamin A.
- **Beta-carotene** - an antioxidant that helps protect cells and DNA.
- **Bioflavonoids** - powerful antioxidants that work with vitamin C.
- **Allicin** - an immunity booster.
- **Phenolics** - powerful antioxidants that may slow some effects of aging.
- **Lycopene, indoles and anthocyanins** - powerful antioxidants.